(e) the steps proposed to be taken to ensure that trade and industry do not suffer by such mergers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir.

(b)to (e) Do not arise.

PAN Cards

46. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of PAN cards issued in the country as on date by the Income-Tax Department;

(b) whether Government are aware that the possession of a PAN card is bothersome to small income people; and

(c) the steps proposed to reduce harassment of fixed and low income people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Total number of PAN Cards issued in the country by Income Tax Department upto 29th June, 2004 is 3,31,52,859.

(b) and (c) A number of steps have been taken to facilitate the process of obtaining PAN Card by fixed income and low income people. Application forms for PAN can now be obtained from UTI Investor Services Ltd. (UTIISL), National Securities Depository Ltd. (NSDL), local printers or stationers, and can also be downloaded from the website of Income Tax Deaprtment. The completed applications can be submitted at any outlet of UTIISL or NSDL. After the application is processed, PAN Card is delivered at the address mentioned by the applicant.

External Debt

47. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the country's external debt at the end of the last financial year, *i.e.* 2003-04; and

(b) what steps are being taken or are proposed to be taken to reduce the external debt?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM: (a) As on 31st March, 2004, the total external debt stock of India stood at US dollar 112,593 million or Rs. 489,168 crore.

(b) Prudent external debt management policies pursued by the Government, particularly since 1991, have helped in maintaining a comfortable external debt position. These policies include emphasis on raising funds on concessional terms and from less expensive sources with longer maturities, monitoring of short-term debt, prepaying high cost loans and encouraging non-debt creating capital flows.

Tax on petroleum products

48. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that money is collected through tax on petroleum products in the country;

(b) if so, the percentage of tax and cess collected over basic price on petrol, diesel, gas and kerosene; and

(c) the States where maximum and minimum rates on these products are being realized in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Petrol, diesel, Liquefied Petroleum Gases (LPG) and kerosene attract different rates of excise duties. Present rates of Central Excise duty are as under:

Product	CENVAT	SED*	Rates of duty AED" (Rs. per litre)	SAED*** (Rs. per litre)
Petrol	16%	10%	1.50	6.00
Diesel	11%	-	1.50	-
LPG	8%	-	-	-
Kerosene	16%	-	-	-

* Special Excise Duty (SED)
**Additional Duty of Excise (AED)
*Special Additional Duty of Excise (SAED)